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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 9, 2003

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Senate Votes for Stricter Regulation of Waste

LANSING – Legislation sponsored by state Sen. Nancy Cassis that would impose stricter regulation on transported waste was passed unanimously by the Michigan Senate today. Senate Bill 502 is part of a 14-bill package that would impose tighter restrictions on solid waste disposal in Michigan.

“For good reasons, we don’t accept certain materials from Michigan trash, it only makes sense that we don’t accept those same materials from other sources,” Cassis said. “This truly represents a comprehensive ‘Michigan Plan’ that will ensure the health, safety and general welfare of the people of this state according to time-honored, legal principles.”

Senate Bill 502 amends the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection act to prohibit out-of-state waste from entering the state unless the place of origin has the same stringent waste standards as Michigan. The bill would prohibit materials from other states and countries such as tires, batteries, yard clippings, and used oil, from Michigan landfills. Such materials are already prohibited from Michigan waste.

“It is my intent to remove a double standard in trash disposal,” said Cassis. “Michigan citizens have called for legislation and deserve nothing less.”

Sen. Cassis also sponsored Senate Resolution 12 as part of this package, urging Congress to act on granting states the authority to control out-of-state waste.

Other key provisions in the package include:

- Authorizes the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to establish a statewide inspection program, which would mandate at least four inspections each year of each landfill to ensure compliance. Random inspections would also be conducted to help ensure compliance.
- Adds two important new landfill bans—beverage containers and whole tires—to further reduce reliance on landfills and encourage recycling.
- Grants the DEQ director emergency power to prohibit any waste shipment that poses a threat to the public’s health or safety or to the safety of the environment.

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- Starting Oct. 1, 2004, landfills would be required to refuse waste, regardless of its source, that did not meet Michigan's stringent waste standards.
- Adds new fines, of up to \$25,000 per day, for violating certain laws related to disposing of waste in landfills.
- Mandates a 2-year moratorium on issuing certain new landfill permits.

The entire package was unanimously recommended by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs earlier this week. SB 499 now goes to the House for consideration.

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